

Coins

A \$5 'find' turns up

By Roger Boye

PERHAPS the "upside-down" dollar bills have perked collector interest. Or perhaps some disgruntled coin collectors have decided it's too difficult to find old coins in circulation and too expensive to buy them.

For whatever reasons, collector interest in United States currency seems to be on the rise. Several dealers report increased business in old bills, many of which are still relatively cheap. And the numismatic press has been carrying more and more articles about paper money.

This growing popularity of paper money has also been evident in questions I have received from Tribune readers.

Q—While sorting some old letters, my grandmother made a startling discovery: an "Indian-head" \$5 bill which is quite a bit larger than our fives of today. The words "Silver Certificate" are above the Indian, and "Series of 1899" next to him. Naturally, we're excited about this, and want to know if it has any value. — A. R., Chicago.

A—Your \$5 bill was common in the early 1900s, but is a rather valuable collector's item today. Most of the very fine specimens sell for about \$75, and uncirculated bills go for \$300, according to currency catalogs.

The large size [about 1½ times the surface area of today's bills] was typical of U. S. paper money printed in that era. The size of currency was

reduced in 1929 to make it more convenient to use, and to cut production costs.

The Indian portrayed on your bill is Sioux Indian Chief Onepapa.

Q—I got a dollar bill in change with a green ink smear on the back that looks as though it was done during printing. Could it be worth anything other than \$1?—J. K., Elmwood Park.

A—Ink smears are usually caused by two sheets [currency is printed on sheets of 16 noted per sheet] rubbing together while the ink is still wet. Some dealers have sold \$1 bills with good-size ink smears for about \$7.50 in very fine condition to about \$15 for a bill in uncirculated condition.

If you were to try to sell your bill to a dealer, you might get from \$3 to \$5 for it, assuming it shows some signs of having been in circulation.

Q—I have a few \$5 bills with red serial numbers and a red seal, all series 1963. I would like to know if they have any value other than \$5.—F. I., Chicago.

A—Your "United States Notes" were circulated along with the more common "Federal Reserve Notes" with green numbers and seal. The \$5 "United States Notes" were last put into circulation in 1967, while the "Federal Reserve Notes" are still being made today.

Dealers sell these bills for about \$6.50 in extremely fine condition, and \$10 uncirculated.